Ritual Paraphernalia and the Foundation of Religious Temples: The Case of the Tairona-Kágaba/Kogi, Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, Colombia

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Abstract. Recent radiocarbon dating of artifacts collected by K. T. Preuss in 1915 confirms the association in time with the proposed sequence of temple foundations of the Kágaba/Kogi, an ethnic group of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta. The antiquity of the temple foundations can be deduced from the genealogy of the priests in charge documented by K. T. Preuss. Ritual paraphernalia, like masks, which have obviously been created commemorating the foundation of a temple, give us a hint in terms of modeling the bases of power and the development of monumental architecture. The antiquity of the masks still in use by the Kágaba/Kogi gives us the opportunity to connect the pre-Columbian to the actual iconography of ritual paraphernalia. By consequence we can try to explain and test the foundation of temples, the use of religious paraphernalia by priestly organizations as well as changes and continuities since pre-Columbian times.

Introduction

The Kágaba or Kogi is the last indigenous theocratic chiefdom that survives in the American continent. This ethnic group has the characteristic of maintaining its political and ideological structure around a hierarchy of priests of their own religion. The origin of their cosmogony dates back to pre-Columbian times and is linked to what is generally known as the Tairona culture. Religion in this society has been recognized to have occurred with only minor changes since the Spanish conquest in terms of the overall ideological structure and action of the priest. As a consequence, our understanding of its history and resilience in terms of the practice of its ideology is relevant to our understanding of similar societies that existed in the past and that can develop as well in the present. This gives us the opportunity to draw directly from the ethnographic present to the archaeological past, a methodological approach that some authors call a "direct historical approach" (see Marcus and Flannery 1994: 55–56; Willey and Sabloff 1980: 108).

The objective of this essay is to contribute to the understanding of the origins and the development of theocratic societies. By using the dance masks, we are able to test a hypothesis about the foundation of temples and the significance of ritual paraphernalia in the broad ideological context of materiality on "Things replete with meaning". The definition of the "thing" follows that given by Miller (2000: 74) demonstrating the relativity of the role of sign and designate, according to which the sign is itself a meaning replete with limitless significance. By studying the Kágaba masks in the perspective of what Igor Kopytoff (1986: 73–75) and Arjun Appadurai (1986) call a biography of "things" with historical and social lives, we try to contribute to our understanding of the development of theocratic societies. These masks are sacred by achieving a singularity that resists transformation into a commodity. However, this sacred nature can be subject to change and may end in a "terminal commoditization" (for example, being bought or stolen to be displayed or stored in a museum). Finally in this study, the masks are compared to their representations in a pottery vessel that illustrates the contextual meaning of the ritualized yearly cycle of dances in the archaeological past of the Tairona and the present-day Kágaba/Kogi. This cycle regulates the cosmological calendar and structures the daily life of this society.

This study opens a window into an understanding of the process involved in the routinization of ritual authority and the meaning of the associated material culture (Oyuela-
As we will demonstrate in this paper, the foundation of religious authority depends on the active intervention of an individual; but, for the continuous resilience of this religious authority, its foundation must be embedded in the material culture associated with it.

The Kágaba/Kogi and the foundation of temples

The Kágaba/Kogi are an ethnic group that speak a Chibchan language, which spread over lower Central American and the Northern Andes at the beginning of the first millennium (Hoopes 2005). The Kágaba/Kogi probably reorganized at the north flank of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta mountain (Fig. 1) after major battles in the time of the Conquest from 1501–1600 A.D. It has been argued that the religious system of the Kágaba/Kogi has deep roots extending to pre-Hispanic times (Preuss 1926; Reichel-Dolmatoff 1985; Bischof 1971, 1972; Oyuela-Caycedo 1998, 2001). Being a theocratic society today, temples are central to the life of this ethnic group. As a consequence, an understanding of the foundation of the temples is essential for our appreciation of the resilience of their religious system and political organisation.

Kágaba/Kogi oral and mythological traditions are informative as to the origins of the temples. The Kágaba/Kogi consider that the first mythical father, Seižankua and his three sons, are the founders of lineages of priests (Mama) and gave birth to the first temples:

Fig. 1 Map of the Caribbean Coast and Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, Colombia (drawing by Ulrich Gebauer after Oyuela-Caycedo/Raymond 1998: 41–42).
Table 1 Mythical fathers as founders of lineages of priests and their ceremonial temples.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Father</th>
<th>Ceremonial Temple</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sežankua</td>
<td>Hukumėzi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sintana</td>
<td>Mukangalakue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kultavitaibuya</td>
<td>Noavaka, Nuameiži</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seokukui</td>
<td>Takina</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This mythological concept of the father as a founder has as an important characteristic having a spatial origin that corresponds to present day locations (Fig. 2), as well as do the temples of his sons. This aspect suggests that Sežankua was a real individual, a prophet in all senses, and his sons were priests in charge of the routinization of the new belief system. However, the timing in mythological terms is different from the generational sequence, as will be explained.

The first three temples are located in the valley of the Palomino River; Takina is located in the upper valley of the San Miguel River. The oral tradition of the Kágaba/Kogi keeps track of the genealogies of the corresponding priests, back to the mythological founding fathers of the temples. Furthermore, the Kágaba/Kogi priests know the derivations of the temples made for the grandsons of the first father: the house of Makotáma was built by Sežankua for Akinmakú or Guakinmakú (note the words’ terminations in maki=chief), and he also built the temple of Kasikiále (Sežua) in the middle valley of the San Miguel River for Alukuñá (Preuss 1926: 35). According to Preuss (1926: 34) and Reichel-Dolmatoff (1953: 82), it is very probable that this foundation of temples resulted from a migration from Palomino.

Hypothesis

Based on the mythology and the genealogies collected by Preuss (1926: 32–34), Oyuela-Caycedo (2002) calculated the probable dates of the foundations of the temples, estimating a minimum of five priests and a maximum of eight priests per century, before 1920, when this information was collected.
Table 2 Temples of the Kágaba/Kogi and their estimated dates of foundation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Temple</th>
<th>Number of successive priests</th>
<th>Estimated foundation date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hukumëizi</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>800–1250 A.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noavaka</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>1150–1450 A.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mukañgalakae</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>1400–1600 A.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Takina</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>1450–1650 A.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kasikiale = Seizu</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1750–1800 A.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Makotama</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1800–1850 A.D.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Parting from the hypothesis that the foundations of temples are related to the manufacturing of ritual paraphernalia, it is logical to argue that at least some of the paraphernalia would have been inherited by the next generation. This would especially be the case if power and prestige are attached to the artefacts and not to the individual in charge of the temple. The ritual paraphernalia of the Kágaba/Kogi consists of dancing costumes, which vary in relation to the mask which is worn in performance, crowns of feathers, wooden sticks, earrings, breastplates, bracelets, broad-winged ornaments (according to Alden J. Mason 1936: 179), ligatures, and bells attached to different parts of the cloth. Some of these are artefacts found in archaeological contexts such as earrings, pendants, bells and beads of gold or volcanic crystals. Musical instruments that are used in the rituals include drums, flutes, and rattles.

For the Kágaba/Kogi the performance of a masked dance defines time and space, and by consequence synthesizes their cosmology. It defines the seasonality of the agricultural cycle and the astronomic year as bases for the structure of the universe. The priests in charge of the different temples exclusively perform these dances. Not all temples possess masks, so not all priests know how to dance or sing. This is precisely why masks are key to understanding the roots of power in priestly societies such as the Kágaba/Kogi.

The missionaries in the early colonial times were also conscious of the importance of temples and masks for the continuity of traditions, or to define it better in the words of Max Weber, “the routinization of religion”, which is why they focused on these elements in their policy of destruction of the autochthonous beliefs (see San Luis Bertrand in Simón 1981 volume V: 425–426, 233). The Augustinian Friar Francisco Romero
Fig. 4 Mask of "Mama Uâkai" and Mask of "Mama Nuikukui Uâkai" or "Malkutse" in Noavaka. Photograph: Konrad Theodor Preuss 1915 (now: Ethnological Museum Berlin, inv.no. VA 62649 (left), VA 62650 (right).

Fig. 5 a, b Mask of "Ma'kuki" in Noavaka. Photograph: Konrad Theodor Preuss 1915, Archive Världskulturmuseet Göteborg, No. 3861.

Fig. 6 Mask of "Maluku" in Noavaka. Photograph: Konrad Theodor Preuss 1915, Archive Världskulturmuseet Göteborg, No. 3858.

Fig. 7 Mask of "Suvalyö" in Noavaka. Photograph: Konrad Theodor Preuss 1915, Archive Världskulturmuseet Göteborg, No. 3859.

Fig. 8 Mask of "Mejžânki" in Noavaka. Photograph: Konrad Theodor Preuss 1915, Archive Världskulturmuseet Göteborg, No. 3859.
Fig. 9 “A small boy neophyte, training for the priesthood, dancing with mask and rattle, while other boys supply the organ accompaniment on gourd trumpets.”
(no provenience, Alden Mason 1926: 35).

Fig. 10 Mask from the collection Gregory Mason at the University of Pennsylvania (Gregory Mason 1938).

Fig. 1 Author offering the Palomino mask to Mama Asoncion at Takina.

Fig. 11 Intent of devotion of the mask at Takina and Makotáma by Gregory Mason (Gregory Mason 1938, plate LIV).
gave the first description of masks and other wooden artefacts in 1693 [1955]. Romero – as an apostolic missionary and extirpador de idolatrias – destroyed most of the paraphernalia he encountered in the region of Atánques in the southeast of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta (1955: 83–85). Nevertheless, Romero saw himself confronted with a resistance to his missionary policy even within the Catholic Church. Therefore, he gathered some of the wooden objects to send as evidence of heresy to convince those responsible for the “Sagrada Congregación de la Propagación de la Fé” of future missions in this area² (Romero 1955: 11–12; Bischof 1972: 394; Reichel-Dolmatoff 1990) (Fig. 3). These masks of the 17th century are still conserved in the Vatican and are the oldest known Kágbapo/Kogi masks in museum collections.

For the whole Kágbapo/Kogi area there are very few other masks in museum collections or photographed in situ. Two masks (Fig. 4) were collected by Konrad Theodor Preuss in Noavaka in the upper Palomino River (November 1914–11. April 1915)³ and now form part of the collection of the Ethnological Museum in Berlin (Preuss 1926: Fig. 22; Reichel-Dolmatoff 1990: XLVII). Preuss also took several photographs of masks and mask dancing in Noavaka, 1915 (Fig. 5, 6, 7, 8) and recorded some of the songs with a phonograph (Preuss 1926: Fig. 23, 24, 25, 26, 30, 31). His description of the ritual dances on the March Equinox is the only one contextualizing these masks (Preuss 1926: 112–117, 273–280).

Other photographs of masks were taken by J. Alden Mason and show a boy neophyte, training for the priesthood, dancing with mask and rattle (1926: 35) (Fig. 9). Years later Gregory Mason followed the trip of J. Alden Mason and did his fieldwork in the region of San Miguel and Palomino for his Ph. D. dissertation on the Culture of the Taironas.
He obtained a mask illegally in October of 1931 at the village of Palomino (also known as Taminaka) in the middle Palomino valley (the owner of the mask was Mama Miguel Nolavita, informant of Preuss) and this mask is now at the museum of the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia (Mason 1938: 175) (Fig. 10, 11). Gregory Mason also took some photographs of an assistant to the Mama dancing with a drum in San Miguel, as well as of the son of Mama Damian of Kasikiale (Sețuța) (Fig. 12). From recent years, only one photograph exists of Pedro Dingula dancing in Makotama in the early 1980's (Mayr 1984: 117) without further descriptions (Fig. 13). These are the only records known to exist for different types of masks from the Kágaba/Kogi from the 17th to the 20th centuries.

The antiquity of Kágaba/Kogi masks

Until now, all of these masks have been considered to be contemporaneous to the time of their collection. Nevertheless, some authors believed these items may have been connected to the pre-Columbian past, however none were able to demonstrate this. Preuss argued for an early origin of the temples, as in the case of Hukumeți, Palomino. Based on the list of fifty-five priests, he suggested that the temple’s foundation might go back more than one thousand years (Preuss 1926: 34). He also recognised that Kágaba mythology was rooted in the Tairona archaeological complex as well as the knowledge and the teaching of apprentices for priesthood (Preuss 1926: 43). Preuss even recorded in the mythology a description of how to take care of the masks and ritual paraphernalia so that it would survive for generations (Preuss 1926: 141). These instructions were given by Žantana (one of the first fathers in the cosmogony). With all these elements which
refer to an archaeological past, Preuss neither stated the antiquity of the masks nor did he relate the masks to the foundation of the temples. Gregory Mason, however, mentioned that in an interview with Mama Damian (priest of Kasikiale) "The mama also stated that the mask was of Tairona manufacture ‘hace muchos siglos’ and had been handed down to the modern Kágaba through generations of Tairona and Kágaba shamans" (Mason 1938: 175–176).

In recent times, Henning Bischof (1972: 393) concluded that the masks in Berlin could have an antiquity of 200–250 years before their collection in 1915. Because of the close similarities with the Vatican masks collected in 1693 by Friar Romero, he proposed the Vatican masks to have an antiquity of no later than the 16th century. Reichel-Dolmatoff (1990) established the hypothesis of the continuity of mask use between the Kágaba/Kogi and the pre-Columbian Tairona based on the representations of masks in the pre-Hispanic material culture in metalwork, ceramics, bone and stonework (Fig. 14).

In order to establish the absolute antiquity of the masks, it was decided to radiocarbon date those masks in the Berlin collection. Fortunately, the provenience of the masks was known as being from the temple of Noavaka. Preuss reports a sequence of thirty-nine priests at Noavaka. Estimating between five and eight priests per century, the estimated date of the temple foundation would be between 1150–1450 A. D. To date the masks, two milligrams of wood were extracted by perforating the lower rear side of the masks. The surface from the sample was excluded in order to avoid contamination. Only material from the cores of the masks was submitted for radiocarbon dating using AMS. The samples were sent to two different laboratories (BETA and the University of Arizona AMS radiocarbon laboratory). The AMS C-14 dating of the two masks at the Ethnological Museum in Berlin collected by Konrad Theodor Preuss (Fig. 15, 16) now confirms the hypothesis of their pre-Columbian origins.
The Kágaba/Kogi masks and seasonality

Accepting the direct historical continuity of masks in temple foundations in order to sustain religious authority, it becomes important to understand the type of knowledge that is transmitted in the temples and which is the base of power. In priestly societies, knowledge pursues the establishment of a cosmic balance. The way to archive this equilibrium is through negotiations with the lords of the Universe. The priest is a broker in an indirect negotiation. He has to divine the demands of the ancestors and lords of the Universe and “pay” them with offerings. Mask dances have the quality of synthesizing time and space, by being performed in specific moments of the yearly cycle, which is projected onto the space of the temple (Reichel-Dolmatoff 1975, 1984).

An archaeological piece of the collection of the Museo del Oro (Bogotá, Colombia, inv.-no. C 00738) synthesizes in a very explicit way the idea of masks being associated with temples as well as cosmological space and time (Fig. 17). The cylindrical ceramic
vessel represents an architectonical structure, which resembles the temples of the Kágaba/Kogi (*nunhwe*) (Fig. 18), distinguished from the common housing by the woven structure of the external wall. The Kágaba/Kogi have a sexual division of dwellings and temples. The fact that women are excluded from handling masks, suggests that it is a representation of a male temple.

In the interior of this representation of a temple, there are eight masks hanging on the wall. The mask of *Hisei* features a lower maxillary with large canines, protuberant eyes and a snake around his head. Looking at both of the representations, the *Hisei* mask on the ceramic vessel wears a double snake, like a headdress, and the dance mask of *Hisei*
(Preuss 1926: fig. 31–34) shows the design of a poisonous *viperidae*, the *Bothrops landsbergi*, which usually is called "Talla X"⁴ (Fig. 19 a, b). *Hisei* is the main mask in the ceremony of the spring equinox, which was recorded by Preuss at the village of Palomino (*Hukumeiži*).⁵ In this ritual there are two masked dancers performing: *Hisei* (Fig. 20) and *Surli* (Fig. 21), the latter being subordinate to the first. The higher rank of *Hisei* in the hierarchy of these masks seems to be marked by richer golden jewellery (Preuss 1926: 115). Reichel-Dolmatoff confirms this ranking, describing this mask as the superior to all of the others: *Hisei* is "makù de todas las mascaras […] todas le obedecen" (*Hisei* is "maku [chief] of all masks […] all of them obey him") (1985, II: 135).

The songs recorded by Preuss at this occasion show that *Hisei* has the duty to assure the ceremonial meal and he is especially in charge of protecting the blossoms of the *kanzi* tree (*Metteniusa edulis*) and also the *kanzi* fruits which are gathered in July/August. *Surli* should "close" the cardinal points to prevent sickness from getting in (Preuss 1926: 275, 274). At first sight these two masks seem quite opposite: *Hisei* is synonymous with death and the sunset; *Surli* is the representative of the sun, life and the sunrise (Reichel-Dolmatoff 1985, II: 135–136). Looking at the etymology of the masks’ names, the opposition vanishes: *Hisei* is the term for the dead and for death.⁶ In the myth

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⁴ Legast 1987: 59, fig. 48.
⁵ The March ritual should have begun on March 23, but was postponed two weeks because Preuss became sick (Preuss 1926: 112).
⁶ *Hiseinita* is the term for "mummy bundle" (*hisei*=dead, *lita/nita*=dry).
about Nuhuna, the dead are led to the other world by a butterfly shouting “hisei ataši” (“green/blue death”) (version Arregocé Pinto, Santa Rosa, see also the versions in Preuss, 1926: 243–245 and Reichel-Dolmatoff 1985, II: 154–155). The name of Surlí might derive from surli, “under” (Preuss 1926: 104). The black colour of this mask and the closeness to Žantana7, the destructive aspect of the sun which has to be banned beneath the horizon not to burn the earth, seems more related to the west and the underworld.

Both of the mythical beings deal with diseases:

- Hisei can send sickness, which specific rituals can avoid. These rituals especially include cleaning rituals after death by offering shells and archaeological stone beads in the same number as there are family members to avoid their deaths (Reichel-Dolmatoff 1985, II: 225).

- Surlí can also close the paths where sickness may enter. In the same way as Hisei is responsible for the ceremonial meal and the kanži fruit, Surlí should provide sufficient rain or dryness at the right time in the agricultural year to let crops grow. Also, both of them care for moments of transition: Hisei in the life cycle and Surlí in the agricultural yearly cycle (Preuss 1926: 187–191).

The headdress of Hisei can be interpreted in the same way. The intertwined feathers in different colours, which are arranged in a semi-circle, could symbolise the movement of the sun between the equinoxes. Reichel-Dolmatoff proposes this interpretation because this headdress – in the region of Hukumeži – is only used in the equinox rituals of spring and fall (1985, II: 141–142).

The ritual contexts of these masks relate them to the temporal dimension representing specific moments in the course of the year. Based on the ethnographic data, we can use the position of the mask of Hisei in the temple vessel as a point of reference to contextualize the other masks, for which such diagnostic features do not exist. As the mask of Hisei is associated with the sunset, the other seven masks would by consequence preside over the other cardinal points and the four intermediate directions referring to seasonality (Fig. 22).

On the bottom of the temple vessel there is an incised circle. This outer circle is divided into four segments, two bigger ones with four concavities and two smaller ones

7 Before the mask has been taken from him, Surlí was a companion of Žantana. Žantana is an old mythical being who struggles with the cultural hero Sintana about the fertile black soils, because he threatens to burn them. The cultural hero wins out over him and confines him in the sunset (manaiškaka, the mouth of the sun) (Preuss 1926: 142).
with only three concavities. Above each segment there are two masks hanging on the wall. What is perhaps most striking about these segments is their asymmetry (Fig. 22, 23).

Looking at these as a sequence in time, the two bigger segments are followed by two smaller ones, which might represent the seasons of rain and dryness on the Colombian Caribbean coast. Based on this hypothesis, there should be a representation of the sun mask, *Mama Uákai*, which is distinguished by human naturalistic features presiding over the dry season. In fact, mask no. 6 shows the features of the sun mask, which has to be danced whenever dryness is necessary for slashing and burning the fields (June and December).
The mask with the protuberant tongue (no. 7) is similar to the Meižaňih mask published by Preuss (1926: 88–111)\(^8\) (Fig. 7, 24). This mask is responsible for seed germination (September), followed by Suvaliyi (no. 8) (Fig. 24) who is considered the “Lord of the temple mountains, the rivers and the mountain crops” (Preuss 1926: 307, performed in September and November/December). The bird mask (no. 2) is interpreted to be the mask at the dance of Sinduli, the humming bird, (Preuss 1926: 87) and could refer to ceremonies where songs were performed to protect the crop from birds but also to maintain the birds for their feathers, which are necessary for the dances. There is for example the song of Huitšukui, the anthropomorphic bird, performed to avoid the destruction of potatoes and beans by birds (Preuss 1926: 117). The diagnostic features

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\(^8\) Preuss 1926: fig. 26 A/B and similar to the one in the Musei Vaticani, Am 3241; see also the reference in Bischof 1972: 393.
of mask no. 3 are the protuberant eyes, which are a characteristic of Namsau. The etymology of the name of this mythical being derives from nabusivi, nabu=chill, zabihi=descent (Preuss 1926: 83). The dance and the song to Namsau pleads not to send blue or red snow and are performed in June (Preuss 1926: 329–330). The song of the feline represented in mask no. 4 refers to dryness. Preuss reports that this song is performed in the ceremonies in November/December. It could also be used to promote the beginning of the dry season in June (Preuss 1926: 319). The identity of mask no. 5, which is represented with the whole body, is uncertain. In the determined sequence it would be located on the September equinox.

Other masks, which had been photographed by Konrad Theodor Preuss in Noavaka, near Hukumeizi at the Palomino River, can be identified and also assigned to a ceremony in the yearly cycle, as the other masks for which songs or myths have been recorded (table 4).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the mask (Kougian)</th>
<th>Translation of the name</th>
<th>Month of the year</th>
<th>Reference to a photograph of the mask in Preuss 1926</th>
<th>Reference to songs/myths in Preuss 1926</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mama Uákai</td>
<td>Mask of the Sun</td>
<td>September</td>
<td>Fig. 22 A</td>
<td>p. 315, song 89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suvalyi Uákai</td>
<td>Mask of Suvalyi</td>
<td>September</td>
<td>Fig. 24</td>
<td>p. 307, song 79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saka Munkulu</td>
<td>Grandmother Munkulu</td>
<td>September</td>
<td>Fig. 25 A/B</td>
<td>p. 312–314, song 87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meizáshí Uákai</td>
<td>Mask of Meizáshí</td>
<td>September</td>
<td>Fig. 26 A/B</td>
<td>p. 307, song 80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muluku Uákki</td>
<td>Mask of Muluku</td>
<td>November/December</td>
<td>Fig. 30 A/B</td>
<td>p. 288–290, song 56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hisevi Uákai</td>
<td>Mask of the Death</td>
<td>March</td>
<td>Fig. 31–34</td>
<td>p. 275, song 27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mama Surlí Uákai</td>
<td>Mask of the Sun Surlí</td>
<td>March</td>
<td>Fig. 23</td>
<td>p. 274–275, song 26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mama Nuikukuei Uákai</td>
<td>Big Mask of the Sun</td>
<td>without date</td>
<td>Fig. 22 B</td>
<td>p. 276, song 28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Final comments**

The antiquity of the temple foundations of the Kágaba/Kogi can be deduced from the genealogy of the priests in charge documented by K. T. Preuss. Ethnographical documents and the radiocarbon dating of two masks collected in the early twentieth century now confirm the hypothesis of masks being as old as the estimated date for the foundation of temples (as in the case of Noavaka). Taking this into account, the foundation of religious authority is connected to the founding priest. The individual is important for the initial stage of the formation of a religious “communitas” and the process towards its routinization. However, for continuous resilience this religious authority has to be embedded in the ritual architecture and material culture associated to it, as exemplified in the masks and “temple vessel” depictions. The “temple vessel” is the pre-Columbian evidence of the architecture of the Kágaba/Kogi representing the cosmos, as Reichel-Dolmatoff (1984) has proposed. This vessel gives us a look into the seasonal ritual calendar of the Kágaba/Kogi ancestors in pre-Columbian times.

The Kágaba/Kogi religion is defined by a resilient theocratic structure. Their social hierarchy is based on religious knowledge and religious spaces. The place where time and space come together is the temple, which is “replete with meaning” and social memory. The temple embodies different cosmological eras: the primordial age as well as the actual world in which the Kágaba/Kogi live. The temple also marks the territory of the priests’ control and membership of the commons. The legitimacy of the priest is manifest through the memory of past priests’ successions for every temple. In a similar manner, the temple is legitimized through its institutional connection to Kágaba/Kogi cos-
mological origins which are established with the use of ritual paraphernalia in the foundation of the temple. In this process, the history of religious expansion and the formation of Kágbá/Kogi identity is structured. Specifically in the case of the Kágbá/Kogi masks, it has been demonstrated that the study of material culture with an understanding of historical contexts can show us how ideology is created through a biography of ‘things’.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank Richard Haas, head of the collection of South American Ethnology at the Ethnological Museum Berlin for giving us the permission to extract samples for radiocarbon dating of the two masks of the Preuss collection in Berlin and to Helene Tello, conservator at the Department of American Ethnology, for taking the samples. Photographs of the Preuss collection were lost in the Second World War. We discovered that copies had been sold by Preuss to Erland Nordenskiöld in 1920. Adriana Muñoz, curator at the Vårldskulturmuseet in Göteborg, was able to find these photographs in their archives and was so kind to provide us with copies. We are specially grateful to Clara Isabel Botero, director of the Museo del Oro Bogotá, who made available the excellent photographs of the “temple vessel”.

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